

"Man-on-the-Street", Washington, D.C., December 8, 1941

AFS 6358A

Location: continued from Palace Theater

Man with British Air Command: ??? concerned I believe so.

Philip Cohen: I see. How about from other angles? Were there any other dangers accruing from not getting in at an earlier date?

Man with British Air Command: Well, necessarily England and the other countries are depending a great deal on products from the United States and Canada. And whatever, the United States now demands naturally will not, will be diverted rather from material and equipment that they intend to supply to these other countries.

Philip Cohen: I see. How about you? Would you? How do you feel about this?

Unidentified Man: Well, I would just like to express my opinion in the same way that a thousand of others have done. Even as a kid when you go to fight you usually tell the other, your opponent, isn't that right?

Philip Cohen: That's right.

Unidentified Man: Well I think a person would be a leader, especially of a country that would not give warning [*cars driving by*] would have to be very low and very cheap. I think a lot of them will agree. That's not an original opinion, it's just —

Philip Cohen: Well it's certainly what a lot of people feel. Sir, how old are you, actually?

Unidentified Man: Twenty-seven.

Philip Cohen: Are you eligible for this draft? Are you working for the government?

Unidentified Man: No, I have a deferred classification. I'm a printer at the Navy Department now.

Philip Cohen: I see. How do you feel, now that the war has begun, how do you feel it's going to go?

Unidentified Man: Well, I don't see a reason why the United States can't win.

Philip Cohen: Do you expect the other countries to join in? There seems to be a rumor in tonight's paper that the other countries are, that Germany and Italy have joined with Japan. How do you think that will affect the whole issue?

Unidentified Man: No, that will, probably will, no doubt, have some affect. I'm not informed well enough to say yes or no, but just offhand I don't think Italy can offer much help. Some of course.

Philip Cohen: How about the other people where you work? What was their reaction? What did they say when they —

Unidentified Man: Very much the same as mine. Just about the same as I would express there. There are all different angles that boil down to practically the same thing.

Philip Cohen: Did they feel that it was good that the uncertainty was over or were they worried about it?

Unidentified Man: No, no one seemed to be worried. They all seemed to be glad and after checking the news flashes on the navy bulletin board they kept waiting, and was anxiously waiting for war to be declared. It seemed to be the general impression that I got.

Philip Cohen: Is there anybody else that would say a word for us? Won't you? Come on, just . . . How did you feel when you first heard the news of the war?

Unidentified woman: Well, I couldn't say anything, I didn't know what to say or think. I didn't think it was coming on so soon, but I guess we all had a feeling it would be on.

Philip Cohen: How do you feel now that it has begun? How do you feel it's going to go?

Unidentified woman: Well, I hope that everything can be solved within a short time.

Philip Cohen: Do you think it's going to be a short war?

Unidentified woman: I think so. I hope so.

Philip Cohen: And what do you mean by "short?" That we'll knock Japan out or that —

Unidentified woman: Well, I hope we beat the hell out of them [*laughter*].

Philip Cohen: Well, how about if Japan and, or if Italy and Germany join? There's some rumor in the paper tonight —

Unidentified woman: There is?

Philip Cohen: — that they have joined.

Unidentified woman: Well, I think that our air force is strong enough to beat them all. I hope it is.

Philip Cohen: Well, let's all hope [*laughter*]. How about you, will you give us a word? [*laughter in the background*] How old are you?

Man: I'm nineteen.

Philip Cohen: What's your name?

Man: [removed]

Philip Cohen: Well how do you feel about this thing as —

Man: Well, I . . .

Philip Cohen: — the upcoming generation?

Man: Well, I tell you I didn't want us to go war. I mean like everyone else, we'd like to keep out of it, but now that we're in there I hope we go to work on them and really give them something that they'd be sorry for. I really think that they were kind of forced in it by Germany. I mean, part of a prearranged plan sort of that too many supplies were going to England and it was hurting Germany and were beginning to feel it. Russian, England, Canada and all the supplies piling up on them. Try to divert some of them like that other gentleman said and —

Philip Cohen: How do your other Do you have any friends who are drafted in the army?

Man: Well, yeah. I have a friend who was drafted in the army and just was released four days ago 'cause of his father's illness and he has to go back.

Philip Cohen: Did they call all of the men back right away?

Man: Well, many as I know. My cousin's flying for the Naval Air Force. He had a furlough and they called him back. He was on twenty-four hour recall, and it seems to have struck everyone pretty sudden. I mean they never expected anything. None of my friends. A lot of them don't approve of it and want to keep out of it, but the majority of them want to go to war.

Philip Cohen: The majority do want to go?

Man: The majority of my friends — and before the war, it's funny, before the war some of them were arguing we shouldn't go to war, different people trying to get us into the war. And as soon as war was declared they came around with another story about we should have gone to war before this and — in the first place.

Philip Cohen: You found they changed, right overnight?

Man: Yeah. Kind of fickle. Sort of like the public is [*interviewer laughs*]. Change their mind very often.

Philip Cohen: Yes. Would you like to —

National Guardsman: I'd like to disagree on that a little. I've been in the National Guard and was one of the first veterans that were drafted. I feel that most of the men are right into this. They just slid into it sort of. I feel that they are prepared for it.

Philip Cohen: You feel that they're prepared, but do you feel that the opinion changed very much as [removed] said after Japan had declared war?

National Guardsman: I don't . . . the opinion might have changed to the extent that it helped them better, helped them out more. I think they're more willing to fight now than they have been.

Philip Cohen: And how is the feeling —

National Guardsman: I think the, well I think the men that I have seen are well-trained.

Philip Cohen: They're well-trained?

National Guardsman: Very well-trained, yes. This outfit that I'm talking about consists of about twelve hundred men and —

Philip Cohen: And how do they feel about the war itself? I mean, have you seen them since, many of the fellas, since the declaration?

National Guardsman: I haven't no, but this was quite a while back and even at that time they felt that they were prepared to fight —

Philip Cohen: They were ready to fight?

National Guardsman: And would fight. Yes.

Philip Cohen: If called on?

National Guardsman: Yes.

Philip Cohen: How was the morale?

National Guardsman: Very, very good. It's very good.

Man: I have quite a few friends who've been drafted and it seems that the morale was sort of low at certain periods and they didn't want to fight and they felt that they were being [invagled (?)] into something and that they were sorry they were in it. And I also read a piece in the paper about that and it said that once we have something to fight for and the people don't believe that it's just preparedness without having any goal in mind, well they'll settle down and get right to work.

Philip Cohen: And what —

National Guardsman: Excuse me. Perhaps that's so with the boys or men that haven't had any training at all, but these men I'm talking about have had a little training before.

Philip Cohen: Before this recent —

National Guardsman: Well, before this. Yes, before this draft and this —

Man: Well, I had in mind —

National Guardsman: Most National men have had some sort of training. We have had quite a few men that were drafted without any training at all and who had the same morale as the rest of the men that had training before. In fact, the National Guard had been originally, something like fifty men to a battery and when we went away there were about one hundred and twenty. So that brings the average twenty more than the original amount. In other words —

Philip Cohen: You seem to be, have something on your mind. Do you?

Unidentified man: I don't know what the problem is.

Philip Cohen: We're just discussing how people feel about the war now that the emergency is declared. What they, people are saying, how you yourself feel about it.

Unidentified man: Well, I think it's a wonderful thing because I'm behind Mr. Roosevelt one hundred percent.

Philip Cohen: And how do you — how are your friends, are they —

Unidentified man: They all seem to be of the opinion that it's a war that's brought about by Germany through the intercession of Japan. They seem to think that we'll fight out to the end and win.

Philip Cohen: Meant, by that do you mean that Germany pushed Japan?

Unidentified man: Yes, we feel that Germany's behind this push because it's certainly is a suicide fleet that's over in the Philippines and Manila at the present time.

Philip Cohen: You feel it's a suicide fleet?

Unidentified man: That's right. It's must be because they certainly can't hope to stand off the United States Navy.

Philip Cohen: How many people — I have wondered about that — how many people generally feel that Germany is behind Japan? Do most people feel that?

Unidentified man: Most of my friends feel that because they seem to think that Japan certainly is in no position to try to overcome the armed forces of the United States.

Philip Cohen: How about you other people? Do you feel that Germany is putting any pressure on Japan? How many think that? [*several voices answer affirmatively*].

Unidentified man: Plenty of pressure

Philip Cohen: What's that?

Unidentified man: Plenty of pressure. I think the Japs alone would have bluffed and were bluffing. I think they were forced into it by Mr. Hitler.

Philip Cohen: What sort of pressure did he put on them specifically? Do you think that he told them to “fight or else he'd desert them” or what?

Unidentified man: Well, they're designated as one of the Axis allies and they haven't done anything and Hitler probably told them to get into it under his instructions or he'd probably wield an axe against the Japs in one way or another. Economically, perhaps, or perhaps physically. He's got his hands full with Russia, but I think he wouldn't mind making it pretty rough on Japan. That's my opinion.

Phillip Cohen: That's well said. Anybody else who'd like to be in the Archive of the Library with a comment? How about you sir? Do you have anything to say?

Unidentified man: I have nothing to say.

Philip Cohen: How about you?

Unidentified man: Say something.

Philip Cohen: Are we going to win this or —

Unidentified man: Yeah.

Unidentified man: I think we are.

Philip Cohen: How about that, the opinion on that — are we going to win this war?

Everyone: *[several voices answer affirmatively]*.

National Guardsman: If I may say something else.

Philip Cohen: You bet.

National Guardsman: I think that Hitler, that one of the plans was to divert our attention to Germany and also the supplies. But I think he's going to, that's going to backfire on him, because after we knock off Japan, we'll be right in ??? for Germany.

Philip Cohen: Has the feeling of the people changed a lot? Have you noticed the people you meet on the street, is there —

Everyone: Yes, they have. [*several voices answer*]

Unidentified man: Those who were against war —

Unidentified man: [*interrupts*] — they're for it.

Unidentified man: — are now for it. The isolationist, the everyday isolationist everyday isolation has changed to an everyday defeatism of Hitler. Defeatism of Nazi-ism. Or any ism outside of Americanism.

Philip Cohen: All right.

Unidentified man: I think that the people feel that this has more or less been brought to us now. I mean we didn't go over there after it. They came to us and now we're going to see it through [*unintelligible — someone talking at same time*]. I don't know much, of course it's very possible that Hitler has something to do with it. But on the other hand, it might be that the military regime in Japan, and not wanting to lose their power and prestige and so forth, have gone ahead fearing that the Emperor might step in and call their hand.

Philip Cohen: All right sir. Thank you very much. Thank you all. All right Jerry, I think that's all we have.